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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VIENNA 002994

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/AGS - VIKMANIS-KELLER

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BROWN'S MEETING WITH FONMIN PLASSNIK,

SEPTEMBER 7, 2005

Classified By: Ambassador W.L. Lyons Brown. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) The Ambassador called on Foreign Minister Plassnik in advance of her September 9 meeting with the Secretary in Washington to review topics that are expected to be discussed. These included:

-- Hurricane Katrina: The Ambassador thanked the Minister for Austria,s offers of a Disaster Response Team (water purification, chemical decontamination, search and rescue) as well as personnel and equipment for the EU assistance offer (crisis intervention team, fire department liaison, communications support unit, and survival equipment). He assured Plassnik the Austrians would hear from us immediately if the disaster management authorities decided to take up the Austrian bilateral offer.

-- Turkey Accession. Alluding to differences we had picked up from EU capitals regarding Austria,s activities vis--vis Turkish accession and Vienna,s intentions for the October 3 start of accession talks, the Ambassador said the Secretary would be extremely interested in hearing first-hand what the Austrian leadership had in mind. Plassnik said she did not want the U.S. to have the wrong impression of Austrian views. Austria,s position was consistent: there should be no new conditions placed on Turkey, and no doors should be shut. She said Austria had put its cards on the table in her August letter to Jack Straw (ref a). She said she had told the British it was not enough to rubberstamp the Commission decision; the recent referenda and the obvious "crisis of public confidence" made it necessary for the EU leadership to hold a serious political discussion on Turkey. Plassnik said she had proposed clarifying language regarding the openness of the negotiations (point 7 in the negotiating framework) which she had discussed with the Commission and would further discuss with Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn on September

17. Austria did not link EU accession and Cyprus recognition nor did it link Turkish and Croatian accession. Plassnik said she had explained to ForMin Gul in a lengthy discussion in Wales that EU commitments to Turkey were not in question. She said she hopes it will be possible to find the right language for the negotiating framework to show the European publics that their leaders have heard their concerns.

-- US-EU Summit. The Ambassador acknowledged Austria,s desire for a Bush visit during the Austrian presidency but advised Plassnik that the Austrians may not get an answer from Washington until after the New Year or sometime next spring. Plassnik said she was not surprised and understood why the president could not yet commit. Since she expected the Austria press to continue to pressure the Schuessel government for news on this point, Plassnik planned to raise the raise the invitation with the Secretary to be able to tell the press she had done so.

-- Afghanistan. The Ambassador thanked Plassnik for Austria,s contributions to Afghan security during the fall elections, noted DefMin Platter,s recent suggestion that Austria might consider sending another contingent to Afghanistan during 2006, and expressed the hope that Plassnik would be as helpful in making another contribution possible next year as she had been in engineering the present deployment. Plassnik did not commit herself, but observed that Platter was doing a good job in explaining the contingent,s activities to the Austrian public.

-- Iran trade. The Ambassador said that the Secretary would certainly raise the serious U.S. concerns regarding Austria,s trade with Iran. While the U.S. knew the Austrian business community was putting considerable pressure on the government to support all possible trade opportunities with Iran, the Ambassador said the U.S. had and always would vigorously oppose any trade involving weapons or dual use items. He reminded the minister that the proposed opening of an Iranian Technical Cooperation Office (TCO) had generated high tensions in the U.S.-Austrian relationship last year. The U.S. was pleased that the Austrian government had decided not to allow the TCO opening, and had also curtailed the sale of sniper rifles, but this was an area she could expect the U.S. to continue to watch carefully and with considerable concern. The Minister made no comment.

-- November Conference on "Islam in a Pluralistic World." While noting that no formal invitations had been received in Washington, the Ambassador said the U.S. Embassy had passed on to the Department what we had been told of Austrian plans for inviting U/S Karen Hughes and A/S Dan Fried to the November 14 event. Plassnik said she was still mulling over how to shape the Vienna conference and would welcome U.S. advice. Afghan President Karzai had accepted; she thought former Iranian President Khatami had at least informally accepted. The Austrians wanted to offer the U.S. a useful platform for reaching out to the Islamic world and its "legitimate leaders." Since the Austrians believe the conference needs strong U.S. attendance to make it

worthwhile, the ForMin plans to ask the Secretary for advice.

-- Restitution Issues. Observing that the Austrian Embassy in Washington had suggested that the minister intended to raise restitution with the Secretary, the Ambassador asked how the minister intended to approach the subject. Plassnik explained that she might mention it in passing as an example of good, steady Austrian-U.S. cooperation, but would not devote time to it.

-- Schuessel Visit to U.S. The Ambassador informed Plassnik that the White House had been provided the dates the Chancellor would be available for a visit to Washington in December.

-- Biometric passports. Drawing on ref (b), the Ambassador turned to the probable consequences for Austrian visitors to the U.S. of Austria,s inability to institute digitalized passport photos by the October 26 deadline. Plassnik said this was the first she had heard of the problem (although her aide confirmed the item was in the minister,s briefing book) and was clearly appalled by the prospect that thousands of Austrian visitors to the U.S. after October 26 would be required to get visas. Plassnik said this would be a "major political issue" for her government, predicting that the Austrian press would maul her if she emerged from a meeting with the Secretary to spread the bad news to Austrian travelers.

-- Ambassador,s departure from post. The Ambassador said that he was tentatively planning to leave Vienna on October 5, and thanked Plassnik for her cooperation.

-- Plassnik,s travel: She will visit Russian on October 6 and was holding September 26 for a possible EU meeting on Turkey.

Brown